

authority on finger-impressions, testified that he had compared the two impressions offered by the state, and had classified ten similarities in the Cominsky print and that found on the crime-scene. He explained (according to the Whiteside Sentinel) that four similarities in prints were all that his department required for the purpose of establishing identity.

Defense Counsel J.J. Ludens of Sterling, Illinois, met the finger-print testimony by summoning Albert Wehde, jewelry engraver and photographer, of Chicago. On direct examination Wehde declared that he had been working in the finger-print field for four years, that through experimentation he had discovered a process whereby he could forge finger-impressions which no expert could distinguish from original imprints, and that he was co-author of a book on finger-print forgery.

Comparing the murder-scene finger-print and that of Cominsky in court, Wehde contended that there were no identical lines in the two prints, and that the difference between them was plainly visible.

Effort to discredit Wehde's testimony was made by State's Attorney Besse in cross-examination. Wasn't it true, he demanded, that the witness had learned about finger-prints while an inmate of Leavenworth penitentiary?

"Yes," said Wehde, "I was a political prisoner. I was sent to prison for -- "

"We are not interested in that", interrupted the prosecutor. "You were a prisoner, that's all . . . . Is it not a fact that you wrote your book to spite government officials?"

"NO", replied Wehde. "I wrote my end of it to show up the shortcomings of the finger-print system."

"Is it not a fact", went on the prosecutor, "that the government or government officials have tried to get you to demonstrate your theories in a convention?"

"Positively not", answered Wehde. Here he attempted to explain that he had sought to demonstrate his forgery process at the 1932 convention of the Illinois State Association for Identification, but he had been denied entree to the convention floor. But Prosecutor Besse didn't want to hear about that, and wouldn't let Wehde tell the story.

Then Wehde offered to demonstrate his method of forgery for the benefit of the jury, but the prosecutor would not permit it.

Testifying in his own defense, John Cominsky denied that he had slain Mrs. McKee, declared that he had arrived home at 10 o'clock on the night of the crime (which was committed about 1 or 2 next morning), and did not leave the house until 5:30 a.m. He denied that he had ever owned a handkerchief like that exhibited by the state.